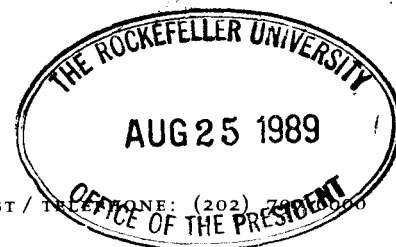


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*Foreign Policy Studies Program*

August 22, 1989

President Joshua Lederberg  
The Rockefeller University  
1230 York Avenue  
New York, New York 10021

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

What a pleasant surprise to receive your thoughtful letter! I would very much like to have the opportunity to discuss these subjects with you.

Just to respond with a few initial thoughts, I see two aspects to the question of a revolution in thought which changes our way of seeing in the world and acting in that world. First is the conceptual shift and second are the people and instruments who turn the conceptual shift into practical changes in the world.

At the present, I am spending more of my time on the character of the shift in the way we look at how our world works. It does seem to me that we are in the early or middle stages of a paradigm shift. For four centuries or more we have looked at the world in terms of its states; now we are finding that the concepts of international relations that derive from that view do not adequately explain the way our world works today. I have come to this thought after twenty-five years of experience in government rather than through research. As I have conceptualized what I experienced, I have realized that the assumptions underlying that conceptualization are somewhat different from many of those taught in the field of international relations. I have spent my last few years trying to articulate those assumptions for myself. In the process I have visited several dozen universities in the U.S. and abroad testing my conceptualization against those in the academic world. I am still trying to refine my assumptions, and what you saw was a very tentative effort.

Once people begin operating from these new assumptions--either consciously or instinctively--then we have the actions of a Sadat or a Gorbachev which dramatically change the course of events. It is probably true, as you say, that the dramatic acts of a charismatic leader are not frequent in history, but an additional dimension to change interests me. If many of us were to shift the lenses through which we see the world, many of us might act differently, and the cumulative effect of that shift might gradually produce the kind of revolutionary change you are addressing. Although it would be more difficult to document such a cumulative shift

over time, something of revolutionary change reflects embedding the change in common every day actions. I have had the opportunity to describe to President Bush and Secretary Baker how they would act differently in the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian arena if they worked from a different set of assumptions about how political change takes place. Many of the specific acts which would flow from such a shift in assumptions could be taken at levels well below those where political leaders operate.

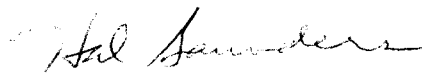
In any case, I do appreciate your thoughts and venture to respond by sending you a somewhat fuller statement of what is on my mind. The enclosed paper is one that I continue to develop as a basis for discussion as I move around through university seminars and non-official international dialogue. I am in the process this winter of trying to build a short think-piece type book around this approach. It seems to me that at some point in the course of a paradigm shift one needs to step back from normal academic research and writing simply to point to some of the ideas that would make a difference if they became part of our common changing perception of the world. It is a difficult task because many people are uncomfortable with concepts that seem abstract, even when one can demonstrate that they would change the course of action if accepted.

My method of "research" is somewhat unconventional. Among social scientists I suppose I might be considered a "participant observer" or a "reflective practitioner." I know I cannot write as a traditional social scientist would write. In fact, some of my academic friends have explicitly advised me to write as a former policymaker for my colleagues in the policymaking world in hopes that some in the academic world will read what I write. Standing on the bridge between the world of policymakers and the world of academic research is not a position that everyone in either camp understands.

In closing, let me add with pleasure that I was delighted to read your review of Bernard Cohen's Revolution in Science, which I bought some time ago with probably many of the same thoughts in mind that you expressed much more precisely in your review.

I hope we may have the opportunity to talk more fully. In the meantime, warm thanks for taking the time to share your views so fully. I will give John Steinbruner a copy of this letter to keep him involved in this exchange.

Sincerely,



Harold H. Saunders  
Visiting Fellow

Enclosure